

Frontline Employee

November 2019

A newsletter from the Washington State Employee Assistance Program

Honoring Transgender Day of Remembrance on November 20th



Transgender Day of Remembrance is an annual observance on November 20th to recognize and honor transgender people whose lives were lost to anti-transgender violence.

Transgender people, and particularly transgender women of color, are disproportionately victims of fatal violence: from 2013-2018, the [Human Rights Campaign](#) reported that at least 130 transgender people were killed in the US (though due to underreporting experts believe the actual number is much higher), and more than 80% of victims were transgender women of color. Transgender people experience disproportionately high levels of discrimination and

harassment compared with the U.S. population: the [2015 U.S. Transgender Survey](#) found that almost ½ of transgender people have been sexually assaulted, and that transgender people experience a three-times higher unemployment rate and a nine-times higher suicide rate than the national average.

Here are some of the ways that you can take action to support transgender people, from [the National Center for Transgender Equality](#): Learn what it means to be transgender -- one place to start is the NCTE's [About Transgender People hub](#). Use the pronouns/language a transgender person uses for themselves; if you aren't sure what pronouns to use, ask -- and if you accidentally use the wrong pronouns, don't worry: just apologize and move on. Share your pronouns as part of your email signature block and when introducing yourself in meetings. Before asking a transgender person a personal question, ask yourself: 1) "Do I need to know this information to treat them respectfully?" and 2) "Would I be comfortable if this question was turned around and asked of me?" Replace gendered language such as *ladies and gentlemen* and *you guys* with more inclusive terms such as *team*, *everyone*, *friends*, *folks*, or *colleagues*. Politely correct others if they use the wrong name or pronoun for a transgender person and challenge anti-transgender remarks, jokes, and conversations.

Finally, remember: the transgender community is diverse, so there is no one right way to handle every situation, or interact with every trans person. Be respectful, do your best, and keep trying.

Learn how WA State is supporting transgender people through the [Safe Place Program](#).



Leadership Development for New Supervisors

If you are a new supervisor, don't learn the following skills by trial and error: 1) observing performance; 2) documenting properly; 3) correcting performance; 4) evaluating fairly; 5) giving feedback; 6) praising and inspiring employees; 7) delegating effectively; 8) resolving conflicts; 9) team building; and 10) communicating effectively with upper management. For a better career, seek these skills out instead. Put "how-to" information in an easy-access binder. There are other skills to learn, like helping prevent violence or investigating complaints, but these ten are the building blocks for nearly all others.

[Leadership Development](#) trainings are also available to those who wish to build upon their supervisory skills.

Improving Communication with Your Boss

A top stressor for many employees is relationship conflict with the boss. But delve deeper and what often appears is irregular or unclear communication. A quiet supervisor one day or an abrupt short answer to a question the next might leave you distracted and wondering about the status of your relationship. "Is everything all right with my work?" "Is the boss upset with me?" "What's on their mind?" Avoid these stressful guessing games. Early on or starting now in your relationship, get clarity with three "traditions:" ask your boss how they like to communicate and how much; ask about the perceived acceptability of your work periodically; and be personable (i.e., "How was your weekend?"). Small civil exchanges make it easier to engage and increase the likelihood you'll team up earlier, more often, and more effectively when the going gets tough.

Are You Addicted to Your Smartphone?

Smartphone addiction is not a recognized mental disorder, but it gets a lot of attention in the news. One in three people can't get through a meal without looking at their phones, according to one study. Signs of problematic phone use may include feeling anxious without your phone, constantly checking your phone without a reason, reaching for your phone when bored, losing track of time while using your phone, being distracted while with friends or watching TV because you are on your phone, and texting while driving—especially after attempts to stop the practice following a near accident or close call. Compulsive behaviors are actions people engage in repeatedly even though they wish they could stop. Smartphone addiction can be one of them. Don't stay frustrated, feeling out of control. Talk with a counselor or your [EAP](#).

World's Most Enabling Statement

Drop the use of the term "functional alcoholic." Often used to describe someone who misuses alcohol whose drinking practices do not appear to cause life problems, this is perhaps the world's most enabling utterance. Alcoholism, like cancer, tends to be a chronic health problem and likely leads to death if left untreated. You may observe that family members who are the most affected by alcoholism virtually never use this phrase. In practical terms, functional alcoholism means "their drinking doesn't bother me." Unfortunately, this phrase fuels denial, offering an excuse to avoid interventions that might otherwise save a life.

Organizational Change and Older Workers

If you have a work history where change came slowly, today's organizational change can be a shocker. It is often sudden and disruptive. If you're feeling overwhelmed, stay positive. Avoid cynicism. Let your employer know what will help you be more productive and contribute more. Avoid isolation, remain engaged, and keep a close circle of colleagues you can turn to for clarification on change and its impact on your work unit. If you're thinking, "Wow, I have never seen things this bad," turn to the [EAP](#) for support to process fears of uncertainty and loss, and allow the counselor to talk you through your next move, life step, finding more meaning in your current job, examining opportunities, and making the best of where you are right now. Such conversations fall under EAP confidentiality.

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